PPE CASE Notes

Personal Protective Equipment Conformity Assessment Studies and Evaluations Notes

Verifying Shelf Life for NIOSH Approved® Filtering Facepiece Respirators (FFRs)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) performs point-of-use (i.e., field location) conformity assessment studies. In a recent study, NIOSH noted numerous challenges that the PPE community experiences when trying to locate FFR shelf life information. **NIOSH does not currently require approval holders to designate a shelf life for FFRs, deferring to approval holders to establish shelf life recommendations for their specific product.**

If you are unable to determine a respirator's shelf life, contact the approval holder or private label entity with the approval number (e.g., TC-84A-XXXX), model/part number, and lot number. Contact information for approval holders may be found on the approval label and on NIOSH's Certified Equipment List.

ISSUES

- Shelf life information may not be included with product materials or may be difficult for users to find.
- Shelf life recommendations are communicated to respirator users at the approval holder's discretion. Approval holders may use a variety of communication pathways to convey this information such as the product package, user instructions, or on a website.
- Without a shelf life recommendation, Respiratory Protection Program (RPP) and stockpile managers lack certainty about when a product should no longer be used.

WHAT TO DO WHEN SHELF LIFE ISN'T ON THE PACKAGING OR USER INSTRUCTIONS

- Find the approval number (TC-84A-XXXX), model/part number, and lot number on one of the respirator units, the product packaging, or the approval label included on or in the packaging.
- Review the approval label to identify the name and contact information of the approval holder or private label entity.[1] Contact the approval holder or private label entity with the approval number, model/part number, and lot number to inquire about the product's shelf life.

ACTIONS TO TAKE TO SUPPORT SHELF LIFE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Once determined, shelf life information should be incorporated into RPPs, stockpile documentation, or other procedures.
- RPPs should include a process that ensures FFRs are used prior to meeting their shelf life (or the shelf life selected by the RPP manager following consultation with the approval holder when a shelf life is not designated). This process can include the use of a "first-in, first-out" approach, where respirators purchased first are used first to minimize the number of respirators in stock reaching or exceeding their shelf life.
- Stockpile managers should clearly mark pallets, cases, or other containers with the date by which the products should be removed from the stockpile.
- Regardless of shelf life information, replace the FFR when damaged, soiled, wet, or difficult to breathe through, in accordance with the OSHA 1910.134 respiratory protection standard.
- Include a shelf life requirement during the procurement process as a purchase specification.

[1] The approval label may indicate the involvement of a private label entity (See Special Cautions and Limitations, Section S, and the user instructions).

Get More Information
Find NIOSH products and get answers to workplace safety and health questions:
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